



Defining the Integrity of Voter Registration Division Records

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The Voter Registration Division of the Travis County Tax Office adheres to clearly defined, standard procedures to process and maintain voter records. The procedures are based on state and federal laws. Unless otherwise noted, legal references listed in this document refer to Texas Elections Laws, 2014 – 2018 Edition.

The purpose of this report is to describe division procedures in five parts, including:

- Processing Applications
- Enhancing the Integrity of Voter Records through the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)
- Processing Applications That Do Not Meet Review Tests
- System Maintenance
- Role of Voter Registration in Provisional Voting

Processing Applications

All state issued voter registration applications undergo review for accuracy and completeness (§13.071). The law requires the applicant to complete each part of the application with the exception of telephone number and gender, which is optional information. An identification number, such as driver's license number, is required (§13.002). Common errors in completing an application include failure to sign the application, failure to check the required fields regarding citizenship, and mistakenly inserting the current date instead of birth date.

In the past, there was no variation in the size and shape of a standard voter registration application. With changes in the law and the onset of technology, the standard has changed. Today applications may come in a variety of forms and from multiple sources, including:

- Internet – 8½ x 11 sheet (4%)
- Post offices, libraries, grocery stores, agencies, substations – 4 x 8 fold over (30%)
- In person – including applications from polling locations and Deputy Voter Registrars (24%)
- Department of Public Safety / Texas.gov – Electronic data passed to counties (42%)

Each document received in the Voter Registration Division is scanned, data entered, and indexed to ensure and to provide complete customer service. The imaging system provides the means to track and account for every piece of information received by mail, electronically and in person. As a result, all

applications that must be sent to another county for processing are referenced here, allowing us to provide comprehensive service to ALL customers, including those who do not reside in Travis County.

Document processing follows a first in first out system. After sorting by type , each application is subject to a review test for accuracy and completeness, including:

- Is the address in Travis County?
- Is the applicant qualified by age?
- Did the applicant affirm US citizenship?
- Did the applicant provide a Texas identification number?
- Did the applicant provide a signature?

Applications are scanned, counted by type and then distributed to appropriate personnel for action. Once the application is entered into the voter registration database, it is indexed and becomes part of the permanent voter record. Imaging permits timely research of individual applications to confirm what an applicant submitted. Each application is boxed by scanned date and saved permanently.

Validation of voter applications begins with checking the current voter roll. Approximately 77% of all records contain driver's license number, which facilitates the search for duplicate records. For example, if Charles Edward Littleton registered two years ago with complete name and registered again before the deadline as Ed Littleton, a driver's license search would likely identify the original record. The new information, if any, would be added to the older record and the voter would retain his original Voter Unique Identification Number (VUID).

The Integrity of Travis County Voter Registration Records through HAVA

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), mandated in 2002 by the federal government, changed voter registration record validation and maintenance significantly. The purpose of the law is fraud prevention. What was once optional information, such as driver's license identification, became mandatory. Voters who do not provide a driver's license number must provide a government issued identification number or if the voter does not have either, the last four digits of their Social Security number. HAVA and "Motor Voter" laws have worked together to improve the quality of record keeping.

Motor Voter requires the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to offer drivers an opportunity to register to vote or update voter registration. Travis County residents applying for or renewing a driver's license in person at any DPS office can register to vote by checking a box that indicates their desire to do so. One limitation of this process occurs when renewing a driver's license online. In this case, a link to the voter registration application is provided, and the voter must download, print, and mail the application in order to register to vote.

Every evening, each record entered or updated to the county database is sent electronically to the Secretary of State's Texas Election Administration Management system (TEAM) for validation (§18.061). If the record is validated, TEAM qualifies the voter and issues a Voter Unique Identifier (VUID). The

qualified voter record is returned to the county for issuance of a voter certificate. If the record is not validated, the county must send the voter a letter requesting additional information.

Carrying out the requirements of HAVA is just part of what takes place to ensure the integrity of voter records. Other systematic checks designed to prevent fraud and errors occur through statewide and local review including:

- County Duplicate Voter reports are run and verified daily before routine mailing of voter certificates
- If a voter is registered twice, the newer record is canceled and the data are transferred to the older record.

Processing Applications That Do Not Meet Review Tests

Incomplete or Inaccurate Applications

When an application is incomplete, inaccurate or is not validated by TEAM, the postmark date on the application begins the 48-hour time limit imposed by law (§13.073(a))

During this timeframe, the voter registration division must mail a letter to the applicant explaining what is needed to meet the qualifications for registering to vote. Examples are absence of voter signature, absence of physical residence address, failure to answer the U. S. citizenship question, or TEAM did not validate the voter record.

The applicant has 10 days to return the completed, corrected application. Applications received within 10 days receive the original effective date of registration reflected when the application was first received by the office. Applications that are not returned within 10 days receive an effective date of registration on the day the completed application is received (§13.073(c)). Voters who do not reply remain inactive until a completed application is received. This can be a critical factor if the voter sent the application near the deadline to register.

Late Applications

Late applications are those postmarked or received in person after an Election's registration deadline. Late applications are entered into the voter registration system after all "on time" applications have been processed. Late applications receive an effective date that reflects the postmark on the application. Postmarks are captured by the imaging system.

Late records are not included in the Travis County online records at www.traviscountytax.org and www.votetravis.com. The intent was to avoid misguiding voters who may think they are eligible to vote on Election Day.

System Maintenance

Suspended Voter Records

Until verification is received that disqualifies a voter, registration is permanent. Verification includes voter certificates (or other correspondence) returned by the U. S. Postal Service as undeliverable mail, TEAM data and court documents. In the absence of notification from one of these sources, or when a family member or other person fails to return a voter certificate received by mail for someone who is deceased or who no longer lives in Travis County, the record remains unchanged.

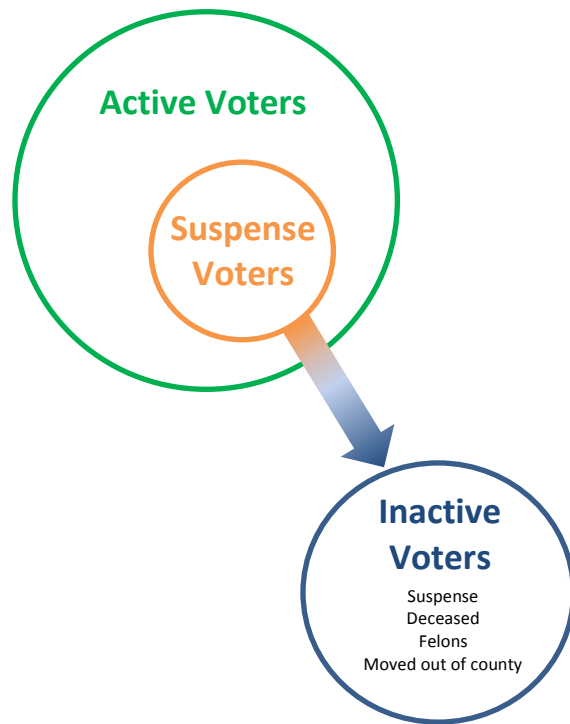
Some voter records are placed in a “suspense” status to signify that the voter may have moved. A suspense flag appears in records of those voters who did not respond to two mailed notices. For example, every two years, the law requires the mailing of renewal voter registration certificates to all voters. If a renewal certificate is returned, the voter registrar places a suspense flag on the voter record and then sends a follow-up mailing called a confirmation notice (§14.021). If the voter responds to the confirmation notice and remains a qualified voter, the suspense flag is removed (§15.022).

Voters in suspense status are eligible to vote in the election precinct where registered if the voter submits a completed statement of residence form at the polling location (§15.112). Completing the statement of residence form or voting removes the suspense flag from the record.

The suspense flag will remain on the record for two consecutive general elections for state and county officers. By law, if the voter does not update their address or does not vote within the two consecutive general election period, the record is canceled and becomes inactive (§16.032).

Inactive Voter Records

The election code requires the cancellation of suspended records every two years after November 30 of a general election for state and county officers (§16.032). If a voter returned to Travis County and registered again, the database would show both the inactive and active records. All voter registration application forms are maintained permanently.



Canceled Voter History from 2002 - 2018

Voters in suspense status and subsequently canceled from the voter rolls:

- 2002 – 36,721
- 2004 – 61,026
- 2006 – 45,774
- 2008 – 35,709
- 2010 – 40,349
- 2012 – 41,505
- 2014 – 34,845
- 2016 – 35,477
- 2018 – 23,171

The Roll of the Voter Registrar in Provisional Voting

A provisional ballot is used when someone is not listed on the voter roll or does not present the legally acceptable identification and indicates to the poll worker that he or she meets all qualifications for voting. The following procedures are used once provisional ballots are delivered to the Voter Registrar by the Travis County Clerk:

- The Voter Registrar examines and determines the voter's registration status in order to make a final determination whether or not the voter is qualified to vote.
- The Voter Registrar has up to seven calendar days to review a provisional voter's eligibility. Provisional ballots cast without the legally accepted identification require the voter to appear within six calendar days in person with a legally accepted identification or exemption affidavit.
- The provisional ballot affidavit serves as a voter registration application. The voter registrar enters the voter information into the registration database using the Election Date as the effective date of registration.
- As provisional ballots are examined and final recommendations are made, the Voter Registrar forwards all documents daily to the County Clerk Elections Division who in turn, convenes the Early Voting Ballot Board.
- The Early Voting Ballot Board convenes to review each affidavit and approve or reject each provisional ballot. No later than the 10th day after the local canvass, the Early Voting Ballot Board presiding judge shall deliver written notice regarding whether the provisional ballot was counted and, if not counted, the reason the ballot was not counted.

For additional information regarding voter registration data integrity or procedures, please contact the Travis County Tax Office Voter Registration Division at 512-854-9473.